



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL REACHES OUT TO MILITARY FAMILIES

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

MILITARY FAMILIES MAKE COUNTLESS sacrifices to serve our country. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) appreciates these sacrifices and wants to do its part by making sure parents in the military know the OAG's Child Support Division (CSD) can help them obtain financial and medical support for their children. Services include: locating absent parents; establishing paternity; establishing, enforcing and modifying child and medical support orders; and collecting and distributing child support payments.

Applications for child support services can be obtained by visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General website at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov or by calling our 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014.

The OAG recognizes that military personnel may require specialized child support services. In response to this need, the CSD offers HEROES: Help Establishing Responsive Orders and Ensuring Support for Children in Military Families. The HEROES project provides military families with expedited and enhanced, family-centered paternity and child support services that are responsive to the special needs of military families. HEROES also promotes early compliance with child support obligations. HEROES currently operates at Fort Hood, Fort Bliss and Joint Base San Antonio, with plans to

expand to Camp Mabry in Austin.

In addition, the OAG offers free legal clinics to military parents who need help understanding their visitation orders. The military Parenting Order Legal Clinics, also known as POLC, are currently held at Fort Bliss, Fort Hood and Joint Base San Antonio. The two-hour clinics are led by experienced attorneys who are trained to address parents' access and visitation concerns.

To make appointments, obtain a legal clinic schedule or to ask general questions, call (512) 460-6400 or email heroes@cs.oag.state.tx.us.

Under certain circumstances, the Child Support Division helps parents modify their child support order. Parents entering or leaving military service may experience a change in income. For military parents, either an increase or a decrease in pay is considered a material and substantial change that may warrant a modification to the order. Visit the child support section of the Attorney General's website to learn more. Parents who feel their circumstances may qualify for a modification can download a form requesting that the child support office review their case.

Children need more than child and medical support from the parent without custody. It is important to children's well-being that both parents stay involved in their lives. Our office helps parents who are engaged in custody or

visitation disputes by partnering with local organizations to provide access and visitation services, including co-parenting education, alternative dispute resolution, development of parenting plans, supervised visitation and visitation enforcement. For more information about access and visitation programs throughout Texas, visit the child support section of the Attorney General's website and select Access and Visitation Help.

The Access and Visitation Hotline is one resource available to parents from anywhere in Texas. The hotline is the only one of its kind in the nation that provides parents with free phone access to attorneys, who offer legal information and assistance related to child custody and visitation issues, as well as paternity and child support information. Hotline attorneys do not represent parents; rather, they provide tools and guidance, and answer parents' questions. The statewide toll-free number is answered in English and Spanish, Monday – Friday from 1 to 7 p.m. The hotline has a corresponding website www.txaccess.org where parents can download sample materials and tools for assistance with child support issues.

The Office of the Attorney General would like to thank service members and their families for the sacrifices they make each day to serve and protect our nation.

– November 2011

POINTS TO REMEMBER



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- Apply for child support services by visiting Child Support Interactive on the main Attorney General website at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov or by calling the 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014.
- Contact your local child support office to request a review and adjustment of your child support order, if you are a noncustodial parent who experiences a change in income due to your military activation.
- The Access and Visitation Hotline's toll-free number, (866) 292-4636, is answered in English and Spanish, Monday – Friday from 1 to 7 p.m.
- The OAG offers free military Parenting Order Legal Clinics to help parents understand visitation orders.
- The HEROES project provides expedited and enhanced child support services responsive to service members' needs.
- To make appointments, obtain a legal clinic schedule or to ask general questions, call (512) 460-6400 or email heroes@cs.oag.state.tx.us.



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